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Book Review: Taking Indian Lands: The Cherokee (Jerome) Commission, 1889-1893

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the federal government to complete these transactions expeditiously. Settlers as well as speculators applied significant pressure to organize Oklahoma into a territory and open the Cherokee Outlet. In response, on March 2, 1889, Congress passed an act creating the Cherokee Commission to negotiate the sale of lands by the Cherokees, Iowas, Pawnees, Poncas, Tonakawas, Wichitas, Cheyennes, Arapahos, Sac and Fox, Potawatomis, Shawnees, and Kickapoos.

As Hagan makes clear, the "Cherokee Commission was many things, but a blessing to the tribes, it was not." Employing variety of primary sources, including remaining transcripts from the Commission's proceedings, Hagan examines the Commission's negotiations and tactics and concludes that "coercion and duress" were used to strong-arm most of the tribes, particularly remnants of the Midwestern and Plains tribes, into accepting allotments and receiving payments for the remaining portions of their lands.

A major strength of Hagan's book is his examination of the interaction between the Cherokee Commission and the Cherokee Tribe. One of the primary goals of the Commission was to acquire the Cherokee Outlet, which comprised the lands between the 96th and 100th meridians, an area highly desired by settlers and businessmen but one that provided the Cherokee Tribe with a considerable income through leases made with cattlemen. Hagan depicts the Cherokees as a formidable opponent who refused to be coerced by the Commission into blindly giving away their Outlet. They tried to negotiate the best deal for themselves because they understood the inevitability of westward expansion.

Hagan's examination of the Cherokee Commission offers readers a further understanding of the dichotomies in the ward-guardian relationship that plagued US Indian policy from the early nineteenth century. The author points out that the federal government completely ignored its "obligation in the face of unrelenting pressure from white land seekers and businessmen." Recognizing that settlers

Taking Indian Lands: The Cherokee (Jerome) Commission, 1889-1893. By William T. Hagan. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003. x + 279 pp. Maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index. \$39.95.

William T. Hagan's latest book examines the negotiations between the federal government and specific tribes in Indian Territory for the sale of tribal lands and the allotment of land to individual Indians. Encroachment by white settlers presented a major incentive for

would continue to expand onto the seemingly underutilized Central Plains, Hagan concludes that any government responsive to its constituents would struggle and probably fail to ensure tribal control over such a vast amount of undeveloped land. That said, Hagan is critical of the government's tactics of using coercion and force to acquire the land at a price well below market value.

Hagan has written a well-crafted, readable book that explores the actions of a Commission not previously examined so thoroughly by historians. His use of primary sources is extensive. This effort to detail events in the Cherokee Commission's history so completely is no small feat. Hagan provides an unbiased assessment of the Commission; however, the overriding conclusion for the reader must be that the Commission was "less than ethical" in dealing with tribes and Indians who stood in a seemingly untenable position.

Hagan's latest work continues his legacy of providing important contributions to the history of westward expansion into the Great Plains region.

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